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NEWSBYTES

Census 2000 web site

Census 2000 is quickly approaching and military members are encouraged to ensure they are counted. Census Day is April 1. Military Census 2000 will be conducted during April 3-7.

Including stateside and overseas armed forces people in the official state totals will help determine the number of seats each state will have in the House of Representatives. The information also helps decision-makers understand where to build hospitals and highways and which neighborhoods need new schools, more services for the elderly or housing assistance. People who answer the census also help their communities obtain the correct amount of state and federal funding. For more information, go to <http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/2khome.htm>.

Aircraft stand down

Air Mobility Command announced Feb. 25 the stand down of 198 of the 546 C/KC-135s in the Air Force inventory as a precautionary measure for a potential stabilizer trim actuator problem. An immediate time compliance technical order will be issued.

AMC officials said there was no precipitating incident, accident, or system failure causing the stand down. The restriction is being imposed as a precautionary measure due to a manufacturing problem discovered during an assessment of processes developed to replace a stabilizer trim actuator on an aircraft. Failure of the gear could result in a jammed stabilizer. As a result, the stabilizer could be stuck in a position that potentially hinders the airplane from going up or down with input from the pilot. AMC officials view the stand down as prudent and said it is in no way connected with the recent crash of the Alaska Airlines MD-80. (Courtesy, AMC News Service)

Aviator continuation pay

■ AF finds initial program rates encouraging

WASHINGTON — Initial returns from the aviator continuation pay program indicate that if take rates and retention patterns remain constant, the Air Force can expect to reduce its pilot shortfall to manageable levels within five years, said personnel officials.

To date, over 3,700 officers have signed a fiscal 2000 contract out of just over 5,700 who have reached the decision-making point, said officials. The program also permits early sign-ups, and another 250-plus pilots have signed a FY00 contract in ad-

vance of the agreement's computed effective date.

The expanded FY00 ACP Program is one of a number of initiatives the Air Force has enacted to respond to recent losses in its pi-

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A new aviator continuation pay program promises to keep more pilots in the ranks.

Obstacles put before Congress

■ Military recruiters list top road blocks

By Staff Sgt. Cynthia Miller

Headquarters United States Air Force

WASHINGTON — Access to schools, educational assistance programs and corporate recruiting were listed as some of the top obstacles faced by military recruiters who spoke before the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on personnel Feb. 24.

"We are experiencing the longest sustained economic growth period in our nation's history that shows no sign of slowing down," said Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Lt. Gen. Donald L.

Peterson, in written remarks presented to the committee.

"The job market is strong, especially in the high-tech industries, and the percentage of college-bound youths has increased to 65 percent, further reducing the number of potential recruits," he said to committee members.

Other obstacles recruiters face are a growing number of school districts nationwide that ban military recruiters on campus and refuse to make school directories available to them, school counselors who advise against military service, a school system that is graded by the number of students who go to college, and parents with military backgrounds who advise their children against joining the service because of

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Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week. Send your letter to the U.S. Air Force Online News staff by completing the online form at <http://www.af.mil/newspaper/>

Due to the number of letters, not all letters can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length. Only letters accompanied by a valid name and email address will be considered.

Step in right direction

Repealing the new BAH rates was a huge step in the right direction. It is nice to see a problem solved quickly and efficiently by our DOD leaders. It seems sometimes addressing issues like this require so much time and effort, but this quick fix is a welcome change. I believe this is also another example that shows service members cannot simply "deal with it and press on" in these situations — the uproar resulted in change.

Staff Sgt. Marc Barnes
Dyess AFB, Texas

Streamline process

I agree with the letter regarding the reimbursement process for the government travel card ["Doing it smarter," Feb. 23]. Why does the Air Force waste time and money reimbursing travel expenses to a member, then have the member turn around and pay Visa? The main issue is some troops, especially junior enlisted, don't always have the extra money to make a payment before they're reimbursed, thus creating the late payment problem. From what I understand, members' travel

expenses are monitored, so why not take the member's voucher and process the payment directly to Visa? That would streamline the process and eliminate a huge percentage of late payments.

Tech. Sgt. John Stuart
Hickam AFB, Hawaii

Revamp EPR system

If Chief [Master Sgt. of the Air Force Jim] Finch really wants to improve retention among first- and second-term airmen, then revamp the EPR system.

The current system is a dismal failure. It is inflated beyond repair. All of the senior NCOs I work with have the same problem. Officers in the chain of command refuse to allow appropriate ratings to be forwarded through the system. They are afraid of losing anyone to separation, even the ones who need to go. We are giving "5" ratings to anyone who will stay and the real "5s" are leaving for better jobs because they see the system as a waste of time and effort to produce EPRs showing no difference between the marginal and the truly dedicated.

Jeff Robinson
Tinker AFB, Okla.

WE BELONG TO A CAUSE THAT IS LARGER THAN OURSELVES Future Force key to Air Force

By Chief Master Sgt. Ronald G. Kriete
Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

I am often asked about the Air Force and what makes it so successful in transforming young men and women into self-assured, responsible and courageous leaders. And I tell them, it's because from the moment we raise our hands and recite that patriotic oath at the time of our enlistment; we fervently believe that we belong to a cause that is larger than ourselves.

The words, "... I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign, and domestic ...," reminds us that when we took our oath, we pledged our allegiance to the Constitution and the nation — they are what we serve. Do you remember the place and time when you recited those words? The lump in your throat, as you committed your life to preserve the rights and freedoms of others? Well, maybe you didn't know this, but our Air Force is having a difficult time getting

our nations' citizens to take on that noble and courageous call to duty.

Our Air Force has issued a call to help bring in new recruits. Whether you realize it or not, each and every one of us owes it to our nation to keep a strong and viable Air Force. We can do this by remembering we are all recruiters and we unknowingly recruit all the time. Anytime someone knows you are involved with the Air Force, active duty or civilian, you are recruiting. Every conversation you have, even the most casual conversation while you fill your vehicle with gas or order at a fast-food restaurant, can have a far-reaching impact on recruiting. Wearing your uniform proudly as you travel from one TDY location to another can unknowingly place that patriotic seed in someone's mind and make them think about the Armed Forces, specifically the Air Force, and their call to duty.

We at Davis-Monthan are fervently taking on this issue. Our program to get new recruits into the Air Force is called "Future Force." We are implementing this in every squadron by having them adopt a high school. The objective is to get out

there and show these high school students what the Air Force has to offer. You, too, can sign up through your squadron POCs to give speeches at the schools, bring interested students to your work place for a tour, or talk to informal groups. Whether you're career Air Force or serving one or two terms, we need you to get involved. Civilians, officers and enlisted — take on the challenge of "Future Force" and recruit one new person to active duty! To find out how you can get involved or assist in this noble and worthwhile cause, call your base or wing public affairs office.

Twenty-plus years ago when a young man walked into my high school wearing his sharp, crisp, professional-looking uniform, little did I know that would be a turning point in my life — to serve my country. When I raised my hand and pledged my allegiance to my country, I became the "Future Force," — that was "then." It is now our turn to ensure the most respected Air Force around the world has a "Future Force," — right now. Commit to this worthwhile cause and make a difference. You'll be glad you did. [Chief Kriete is the 355th Wing command chief master sergeant]



CIVILIAN FORCE SHAPING Air Force develops strategy

By Senior Airman
A.J. Bosker
Headquarters
United States
Air Force

WASHINGTON

— The Air Force is developing a three-part force-shaping strategy to counter its “out-of-balance” civilian work force. According to Roger Blanchard, assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel, it will focus on force renewal, force development and separation management.

“As a result of the prolonged draw-down, we have hired fewer new people causing the civilian work force to become more senior,” he said. “It’s our responsibility to develop an approach to ensure we are making the most of our civilian resources. Our objective is to achieve and sustain a stable, highly-skilled and cost-effective work force with the proper balance of entry, mid-, and senior level positions.”

In an optimum work force, Mr. Blanchard said, “We look for a distribution



Photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Cook

The Air Force is developing a three-part civilian force shaping strategy to sustain a stable, highly-skilled workforce.

of skills and demographics across the force.

“The force is very capable,” he said. “However, there is concern that 45 percent of the civilian work force is eligible for retirement in five years. This raises questions about its sustainability, causing us to do more to renew the force. We must do this now in

order to get the new people prepared to move forward into the more senior positions in the future.

“The civilian force is rich in terms of experience — one of its greatest strengths — and it’s important to manage the force to sustain its experience level,” he said.

To meet its force renewal objectives, the Air Force is developing new accession strategies, such as greater investment in interns and other developmental trainees, to provide stability to its long-term sustainment efforts.

This article is available in its entirety online.

Aviator pay program looks promising

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lot ranks. The Air Force capitalized on the full authority provided under the FY00 National Defense Authorization Act to pay pilots up to \$25,000 a year, through a maximum of 25 years of aviation service. This is an increase over the previous limits of \$22,000 a year and 14 years of commissioned service.

Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Lt. Gen. Donald Peterson, said the early returns are encouraging. “This will go a long way toward helping us hold the line until we begin to see the positive effects of increased pilot production and an increase in service commitment for those completing pilot training,” he said.

“We’re not ready to declare victory yet,” the general said. “We must continue to work the issues that influence retention, like quality of life, [operations] tempo, and compensation, and look for new ways to encourage Air Force people who want to continue serving their country to do so.”

Indeed, Air Force personnel officials note there is still work to be done. Lt. Col. Scott Frost, chief of rated force policy, said these results are initial projections, and many pilots have yet to make their decision. He added that take rates for the Air Force’s youngest eligible pilots — those coming off their pilot training commitment and being offered a bonus for the first time — are lower than expected and are being watched closely.

“The good news is that this lower rate among younger pilots is mitigated somewhat by these younger bonus takers signing up for longer contracts than expected—most are opting to commit to 20 or 25 years of aviation service,” he said. “A similar trend is also occurring in the other eligible populations. The result is we have retained a lot of very valuable experience for the future, and have made some positive strides in reducing inventory shortfalls.”

Complete details on the FY00 ACP Program are available on the Air Force Personnel Center’s Internet web site at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/>

Retroactive BAH requested

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department begins paying certain service members higher basic housing allowances starting March 1. Officials plan to ask Congress to authorize a retroactive hike to Jan. 1.

Pentagon officials announced Feb. 22 that service members moving into areas where 2000 housing allowance rates were set lower than 1999 rates would be paid at the higher 1999 rate. Members already living in such areas were grandfathered, but newcomers received 2000 rates.

“This action will result in greater equity among all people assigned to the same duty location and will also allow the department to pause and examine how we survey and determine the average cost of housing,” Defense Secretary William S. Cohen said in a

written release. “It is extremely important that in every area, nationwide, we are providing an allowance which allows our men and women to live in quality housing.”

The disparity in rates occurred because DOD changed the way it computed housing rates in response to a 1997 law. The new system requires officials to compute the allowance rates based on surveys of what it costs to live in particular communities. The old system depended on service members’ reports of what they paid and worked to the disadvantage of junior enlisted members and to all service members living in high-cost areas, officials said.

Because of the grandfathering service members of the same grade in the same area could receive different allowances.

This article is available in its entirety online.



FY01 money tackles concerns

■ Survey results point to recruiting, retention woes

By 1st Lt. Kristen Skopeck

Air Force Materiel Command Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio (AFPN) — Recruiting and retention shortfalls identified in a recent Air Force survey would substantially decrease because of funds earmarked in the service's proposed \$71 billion fiscal 2001 budget, said Undersecretary of the Air Force Carol DiBattiste.

As key assistant to Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters and acting secretary in his absence, Ms. DiBattiste oversees implementation of the Air Force budget to include the recruiting, training and equipping of more than 710,000 people.

"In a nutshell, my mission is to try to make your lives better," Ms. DiBattiste said, speaking to a group of about 60 company grade officers here during a recent visit.

"Together, we can work on improving our Air Force and making it an organization more attractive to those already in and to those who want to join."

Identifying recruiting and retention issues

that Air Force people said they felt strongly about in Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan's survey, the undersecretary said the Air Force's senior leadership is taking measures to incorporate Air Force-wide changes.

"Today, our retention numbers are not where they need to be — we're off the mark in officer retention, pilot retention and enlisted first-term, second-term and career re-enlistments," she said. "We convened a retention summit made up of people from all over the Air Force and came up with approximately 89 initiatives to retain you in the Air Force. However, if we're not keeping people in at the rate we need, that means we need to recruit more."

This year, as well as last, the Air Force added to its recruiting goals, and for the first time since 1979 missed its recruiting objective, said Ms. DiBattiste.

The undersecretary said Air Force leadership is determined to turn the Air Force's recruiting and retention dilemma around. She said the proposed budget for fiscal 2001 — divided into four categories: people, readiness, modernization and infrastructure — will help tremendously.

The article is available in its entirety online.

Obstacles

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perceived diminished benefits.

According to General Peterson, specific steps the Air Force is taking to combat the decline in recruitment include:

■ Expanding the number of recruiters in the field,

■ Increasing the marketing and advertising budget,

■ Increasing the Air Force presence in local communities by expanding the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps,

■ Expanding the Enlistment Bonus Program to include 100 skills and increasing the maximum bonus amount to \$12,000 for some six-year enlistments,

■ Investing in a trial College Loan Repayment Program in fiscal 2001,

■ Targeting individuals with a mechanical aptitude index of 44 or higher to receive a \$3,000 bonus for a four-year enlistment,

■ Authorizing an additional \$1,000 bonus for recruits who opt to enter service during February through May, which are historically difficult months for recruiting,

■ Allowing General Equivalency Diploma Program accessions to participate in the Initial Enlistment Bonus Program, and

■ Expanding the Prior Service Program to return more experienced noncommissioned officers to duty.

To further aid in the recruiting effort, members of the Senate subcommittee questioned the viability of:

■ installing sanctions against those schools who don't cooperate with federal recruiting programs,

■ the transference of GI Bill benefits to family members,

■ and the proposal of legislation allowing service members to use GI Bill benefits without leaving service.

The article is available in its entirety online.

New technology aids in Japan-wide exercise

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — With technology continuing to change, the Air Force is always looking for better ways to do business. During the recent Japan-wide command post exercise Keen Edge 2000, one initiative -- The Force Protection Command and Control System -- from the Air Force's Force Protection Battlelab at Lackland AFB, Texas, was tested, and lauded by users at Yokota as a giant technological success.

More information on the above items can be found online.

Tax program available to AF service members

WASHINGTON — This year, the Judge Advocate General department's annual tax program is once again helping service members with their income tax returns. The tax program is established by base legal offices throughout the Air Force. People eligible for regular legal assistance may use the program.

Deploy last year? You'll get a break on the amount of money you made and you'll get more time to file. Go online for more information.



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Publishers

Hon. F. Whitten Peters, *Secretary of the Air Force*

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Staff Writers

Tech. Sgt. R.R. Getsy, Staff Sgt. Cynthia Miller
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Technical Production

Capt. Laurel Scherer and Staff Sgt. Cheryl Toner